REFLEXIONS

Upon a

PAMPHLET

INTITULED

An Account of the Growth of DEISM *in* ENGLAND.

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PAMPHLET,

INTITULED,

An Account of the Growth of DEISM *in* ENGLAND.

Together with some

CONSIDERATIONS

About the

Christian Religion.

By Richard Willis D.D.

Qui bonâ fide colit Deos amat & Sacerdotes.

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IT has now for a great while been the Complaint of Good Men, that *Atheism* and *Infidelity* grow mightily among us, which is indeed a very melancholly Consideration, but I am afraid is but too true, did not the Profane and Blasphemous Discourse which one is often forced to hear, sufficiently shew this: The Air and Humour of the Age is so very different from that Seriousness, Plainness, and Simplicity which a through Belief and Consideration of the Christian Religion would inspire Men with, that one who takes

notice of the Difference, cannot eaſily imagine that this Religion is ſo generally believed as 'tis profeſſed. Add to this the great Corruption of Manners, the great Difficulty there is to breed up Young People ſoberly and vertuouſly; or to find thoſe of Riper Years who are Men of Honeſty, Integrity, and Publick Spirit to be employed in the Service of their Country.

Now when a Nation is ſo much corrupted as ours is at preſent, it can hardly proceed but from one of theſe two Cauſes; either firſt from a Corruption in their Religion, by making that conſiſt in outward Obſervations, or giving Men hopes to pleaſe God, and get to Heaven, by ſome other Method beſides real Holineſs, and a Care of their Lives; by which means the Conſcience is left looſe in that reſpect: or elſe, ſecondly, from a Disbelief of the Religion it ſelf: for tho' ſome Men make a ſhift to do it, it is an uneaſie thing to go againſt Conſcience; and therefore a general Corruption of Manners can hardly be without one of theſe two Cauſes, which leave Men at Liberty to indulge themſelves without Diſturbance from it.

As for the firſt of theſe, the Corruption of our Religion, by making that conſiſt in outward

ward Obſervations, or giving Men Hopes of getting to Heaven by any other Method but real Holineſs of Life; it is what cannot be charged upon the Preſent Age or Church; wherein, whatever Zeal may have been ſhewed upon other Accounts for things in themſelves indifferent, yet it has always been plainly taught, that nothing but inward Piety can recommend us to God, or make our Peace with him; and that there is no way of getting to Heaven, without the real Reformation of our Lives. And theſe things have been ſhewed ſo diſtinctly, plainly, and clearly, both in Oppoſition to the Superſtitious Obſervations of Popery, and to ſome Popular Errors about Religion, among our ſelves, that perhaps no Age can ſhew the like; as may appear to any that has been but a little converſant in the Sermons and Books that have been publiſhed by the Divines of the Church of *England*. And I believe one great Reaſon why ſo many Looſe People have made Infidelity their Refuge, is, becauſe it has been ſo clearly ſhewed them that there is no Hopes for ſuch Perſons from our Religion; which they would not ſo eaſily have left, had we had but any Trick to ſave them, and let them enjoy their Sins together. And therefore we ſee that moſt

of our Debauched People take this way, contrary to what may be obſerved in ſome other Countries, where People of as ill Morals as they, yet ſpeak with Reverence and Reſpect about their Religion. Of which Difference I can think of no other Reaſon but this, That the one has no Hopes from his Religion, and therefore treats it accordingly; the other has ſtill ſome Reſerve in his Eye that may ſtand him in ſtead after a Wicked Life, Abſolution, and Extreme Unction, or at moſt ſome Money for Maſſes when he is dead: And upon this Account his ill Morals often increaſe his Zeal for his Religion, and ſet him upon endeavouring by that to make God what amends he can for thoſe Sins he is reſolved to enjoy.

The Effect, I believe, is apt to be quite contrary with Serious and Conſidering Perſons, who among us, cannot but have a Reverence for that Religion which they ſee ſo worthy of God; which does not conſiſt in little Tricks, or outward Obſervations, but in ſolid and ſubſtantial Goodneſs; ſuch as is for the Good of the World, for the Advancement of our own Nature, and tends to make us pious and holy, and as like God as may be. Conſidering Perſons will be very apt to have a Reverence for ſuch a Religion as this.

And

And on the other ſide, ſuch Perſons, if they live in Countries where this is degenerated into outward uſeleſs Obſervations, where Men may get their Sins pardoned, and make their Peace with God by ſuch things as even a Wiſe Man would have no regard to; no wonder if they cannot eſteem it: and if they have opportunity to know nothing of Chriſtianity but as it is thus practiſed, it is no wonder at all if they do fall into *Deiſm*; as our Travellers tell us, that this is a very common thing among ſuch Perſons in *Italy*, and ſome other Countries.

There has lately appeared a Pamphlet which pretends to give an Account of the Growth of *Deiſm* in *England*: that is indeed the Title of it, but I believe not the Author's Deſign; who ſeems to have had no other Aim, but to ſay as many ugly things as he could againſt the preſent Eſtabliſhed Church and Clergy. Whether the Author be a Chriſtian or no, I ſhall not pretend to determine; I would willingly ſuppoſe he is, ſince he ſeems to ſay ſo; but I believe he himſelf will not deny that he has more Zeal againſt the Church of *England* than he has for the Chriſtian Religion; and if he be a Chriſtian, I would leave it upon his Conſcience, how he will be able

to

to anſwer it to Jeſus Chriſt, that he ſhould with ſuch aggravating Circumſtances, and ſo much Virulence expoſe that to the View of the World which he himſelf ſays commonly makes Men *Deiſts*, and yet be at ſo very little pains to give any Antidote againſt it. It looks as if he were uneaſie that ſuch good Arguments againſt Chriſtianity ſhould lie hid only amongſt his Clubs of *Atheiſts* and *Deiſts*; and that he was willing to try how many Proſelites they were like to gain by being expoſed to publick View.

Our Author's Deſign being only to expoſe Chriſtianity, or elſe expoſe the Clergy, which I rather believe, we cannot expect a full Account of the Growth of *Deiſm* from him. I ſhall therefore firſt, in ſhort, take notice of what I judge to have been the Cauſes of the Increaſe of it; and then, conſider thoſe aſſigned by his Author.

1. The great and chief Cauſe of *Deiſm* at preſent, was the general Corruption of Manners brought in in the late Reign, and incouraged during that time both in Clergy and People; and in order perhaps to prepare the way for Popery, carried on ſo far then, that it is now a very hard Matter to reform it.

2. Ano-

2. Another thing that much promoted it, were the Diviſions and Factions both in Church and State; the groſs Enthuſiaſm of the late Times, and the many ill things done under the pretence of Conſcience: And then on the other ſide; the open Profaneneſs of ſome in Oppoſition to them. Add to this, that both Sides too much made it their Buſineſs to expoſe one another, and ſo made each other appear indeed much worſe than they were; by which means, great occaſion was given to ill men, firſt to look on all Sides as Knaves, and then to laugh at all Pretences to Religion.

3. Another thing that accidentally came in to help it forward, might be this; That at the ſame time ſuch Offence was given, and there was ſuch great Corruption of Manners, Mr. *Hobbs*'s Philoſophy and that of ſome others came much in Vogue, which brought in ſome looſe Principles, and encouraged Men in a Sceptical Humour, and made them ſuſpect every thing: and when once Men of ill Lives are unhinged in their Principles, they will hardly be at the pains to think deep enough to ſet themſelves right again; eſpecially when their Religion is ſo contradictory to their Luſts.

4. Another thing that may have promoted it, is the Detection of the groſs Forgeries of the Church of *Rome* as to Miracles and other things; which tho' found out in the Laſt Age, yet then only increaſed Mens Zeal againſt Popery; but now when Men were become more indifferent in Religion, it had a very different Effect, and inclined many People to ſuſpect the Evidence of Chriſtianity it ſelf, tho' very abſurdly, the Caſes being ſo very different.

5. Another great Cauſe of it may be this, That Religion has been openly expoſed commonly in our *Plays*. They have not indeed brought our Saviour upon the Stage, and expoſed him in Perſon; but it has been almoſt as bad; they have made it their Buſineſs to laugh at the true Life of Religion, at all Senſe of Conſcience, or talking ſeriouſly about Spiritual Matters. They have encouraged Looſeneſs and Debauchery, and made it their Buſineſs to make 'em as eaſie to the World as poſſible. In ſhort, the whole Genius and Spirit of our Modern Plays is as contrary to that of the Chriſtian Religion as Darkneſs is to Light; and then it's no wonder if People that are much converſant in theſe, do in ſome time loſe all Senſe of the other.

6. I ſhall name at preſent but this one more, which though not much taken notice of, may have had a conſiderable Influence this way, upon Young Gentlemen eſpecially; and that is this, That by the falſe Laws of Honour now in Vogue, they ſee they cannot live and act like Gentlemen, and at the ſame time keep to the plain Rules of their Religion. Chriſt commands us to forgive Injuries, not to render Evil for Evil; but if a Gentelman at preſent won't cut his Neighbours Throat for a ſmall Affront, he muſt be contented to ſuffer himſelf what is very hard to be born, to be expoſed, and counted a Coward, and be perhaps kicked out of Company; by which means the Chriſtian Religion is really in a State of Perſecution. Now this is a great Snare to Young Gentlemen, and muſt make very many of them reſolve rather to leave their Religion in that Point, than undergo what is ſo hard to be born; and tho' the caſe do never happen to them, yet the very Reſolution muſt debauch the Conſcience, take away much, if not all the Authority Religion has over it, which muſt needs make that very uneaſie, and ſo incline him for his own Quiet to throw it quite off; or come to deſpiſe it, as not being fit to be the Rule of the Life and Actions of a Gentleman.

Had our Authors Deſign been to give us a full Account of the Growth of *Deiſm* in *England*, he could hardly have miſſed either of theſe, or ſome other Cauſes beſides thoſe he mentions; which I ſhall now take the Liberty a little to reflect upon.

He lays then, the whole Guilt of the Growth of *Deiſm* upon the Clergy. A very ſevere Charge; and which, if true, muſt juſtly make them the Hatred both of God and Man. Certainly Clergy-men, of all Perſons, ought to take care of themſelves, that they may not, if poſſible, ſo much as by any Infirmity prejudice Men againſt that Holy Religion which they are Commiſſioned by God to keep up and propagate in the World. And they will have very much to anſwer for, to their great Maſter, if they do, like *Eli*'s Sons, *make themſelves Vile; and make people abhor the offerings of the Lord.* But then, for the ſame Reaſon that it is ſo great a Sin in them to make themſelves vile, it is ſo in others to endeavour to render them ſo: for if they are made vile and contemptible, the Miſchief and Prejudice to Religion is the ſame, whether they are made ſo by their own Fault, or other Peoples. The very ſame Obligation that lies upon Miniſters to take Care of themſelves

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I would therefore once more apply my ſelf to our Author, that he would ſeriouſly ask his own Conſcience, whether, tho' he repreſents the only Cauſe of *Deiſm* to be the ill Opinion Men have of Clergy-men, yet he does not in this Pamphlet make it his Endeavour to render them as vile as he can? and whoſe Work he can ſuppoſe he has been doing in it? For either the Foundation of his Book muſt be ſimple and impertinent, that the ill Opinion the World has of Clergy-men is the Cauſe of the Growth of *Deiſm*; or elſe he himſelf muſt grant, that the expoſing them with ſo much Virulence, muſt certainly ſerve the ſame end.

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2. I would ask him, Whether he has obſerved thoſe Rules in this Pamphlet which every honeſt Man ſhould obſerve when he

ſpeaks ill of any, and much more in a Caſe of ſuch Importance as this is: Every Man that would meddle with Matters of this Nature ſhould take care.

1. That he ſpeak nothing but what is exact Truth.

2. That he relate Matters in a plain and natural way, without putting falſe Colours upon them; without putting in, or leaving out Circumſtances that may quite alter the Matter: that he don't aggravate little things, or uſe tragical or ridiculous Expreſſions to diſguiſe; but in ſhort, that he repreſent things as they really are.

3. When a thing is capable of a double Conſtruction, he muſt not preſently ſuppoſe the worſt; eſpecially he muſt have a Care that he don't, as is too often done, tack his ill Conſtruction to the thing, and ſo repreſent it as part of the Matter of Fact.

4. Though a thing be really ill, he ought to make ſo much Allowance for Ignorance, or Prejudice, or it may be Paſſion, or other Infirmities, as a good Man may be guilty of; and to conſider whether ſome of theſe may not juſtly be brought in to alleviate the matter.

5. That he ſhould at leaſt let every Man bear his own Burthen, and no more; not cenſure one for the Fault of another; or bring in a whole Body of Men for what concerns only ſome, and it may be but a few of them.

Had our Author obſerved theſe good Rules, we ſhould hardly have ſeen this Pamphlet: And now I have mentioned theſe, I believe I may leave it without fear of any great Danger from it. However, I ſhall take notice of ſome Paragraphs in it before I proceed to what I farther deſigned.

His firſt Inſtance that he gives of the Pro- Page 4
greſs of *Deiſm* is taken from the time of King *Charles* the Firſt; for from that time chiefly begins the Hatred of the Party againſt Clergymen. " His Inſtance is of a Young Gentle-
" man ſent to travel into Popiſh Countries,
" and principled by his Tutor to have a Care
" of Popery, becauſe it's a Religion which in
" almoſt all its Branches is only calculated and
" deſigned to ſerve a Turn, *&c.* ----- Well,
" the Young Gentleman when he has done
" his Travels, returns to Old *England*, and
" finds Archbiſhop *Laud* and the Presbyterians
" quarrelling about Power; and this gives
" him a Prejudice againſt the Religion of

his

"his Country, and ſo he turns *Deiſt*.

Now ſure this Young Gentleman had not a good Tutor; or elſe he diſcharged him, as is commonly done, too ſoon. I ſuppoſe when he was ſent to *Spain* or *Italy*, his Tutor did not bid him disbelieve the Apoſtles Creed becauſe the Errors of Popery were invented to ſerve a Turn: but his Meaning was, That he ſhould have a Care, and not eaſily, without good Evidence, believe any thing that had ſuch an Objection againſt it. And he was in the right to bring this Caution home with him, If they were quarrelling about Power, not to believe either till he had examined the Matter. But there were a thouſand other things in which they agreed, and which did not ſerve the End of Power or any other Intereſt; why did he throw them off? But eſpecially, Why did he throw off the Holy Scriptures before he knew whether their *Maſter did encourage them in ſuch ambitious Deſigns?* It was not very wiſely done in a Matter of ſuch Concernment. Yet this was one of our Author's Men of *Probity* and *Sobriety*. But I rather think his Manners were corrupted in his Travels, and ſo he had no great mind to Religion; otherwiſe he would not have parted with it ſo eaſily.

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Page 5.

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As for Archbiſhop *Laud*, who is ſtruck at here, and ſo often in this Pamphlet, I ſhall not pretend to juſtifie all he did: if he were guilty of Miſcarriages, he ſuffered ſevere enough for them, and the Party might now very well let him reſt. But as for his Zeal in defending the Government of the Church; were it in it ſelf an indifferent matter what the Government of it ſhould be, yet ſince Epiſcopacy was Eſtabliſhed, it would not have been very wiſe, without Good Reaſons, to have hazarded ſo many Evils as might come by a Change. But he had this farther to ſay for himſelf, that his Zeal was to preſerve that Government which the Church of Chriſt had univerſally had in all Ages from the Apoſtles Days; that which apparently had been the Government in *England* ever ſince there were Chriſtians here; that Government under which this Church had been reformed, and had ſo long flouriſhed; and therefore that one in his Place ſhould have betrayed his Truſt had he not done all he could to preſerve it.

" Our Author invidiouſly takes notice of Page 6.
" the Biſhops Courts, Style, *&c.* ----- If the Nation has thought fit to ſhew their Reſpect to their Religion by beſtowing ſome Honours or Conveniences on the Miniſters of it, which

they

they cannot, and do not pretend to by the Laws of Chriſt, it will be a hard matter for this Author to ſhew any Reaſon why they may not make uſe of them.

But as for what follows, it is very ſurprizing, and ſhews that our Author ſhould have taken ſome Care to know the Principles of the Church better before he railed at it ſo much: His words are theſe, "But the Biſhop is the "Higher Power, becauſe by the Principles of "Epiſcopacy he can Excommunicate the "King, *i. e.* forbid him the very Converſa- "tion of his Subjects, and thereby render "them uncapable to make good their "Oath of Allegiance in yielding their Aid "and Aſſiſtance. Page 7.

It is like enough ſome may be of Opinion, that it is the Duty of a good Chriſtian Biſhop, or Miniſter, to refuſe giving the Holy Sacrament even to a King, if he be notoriouſly Scandalous in his Life: but, to Excommunicate him ſo, as to forbid him the Converſation of his Subjects, is to Depoſe him, at leaſt if he remains contumacious; which, upon ſecond Thoughts, our Author himſelf will hardly take to be the Doctrine of the Church of *England*.

It is not my intent to follow him through every particular of ſuch a looſe diſcourſe; but only to take notice of what occurs moſt remarkable. He does in ſeveral Places fall upon the buſineſs of the *Perſecution of Diſſenters*: to which I ſhall make no other Reply, but that I am ſorry that all Parties have given each other ſo much Provocation, and have therefore been ſo apt to be hard upon one another at every little Advantage the Times afford; and I am very ſorry, that ſo much Heat and Animoſity ſtill remains on all Sides, and is ſtill like to do, if Men go on to write ſuch Books as theſe of our Author, on purpoſe to inflame.

He expreſſes himſelf very angry at the Teſt, " and calls it a *Church-device*; to which I ſhall make no other Anſwer, but, that it is not an Act of Convocation, but an Act of Parliament; and when made, looked upon to be a good Act by Perſons not thought to be much influenced by the Counſels of Church-Men. And after all, it will be a hard Matter for our Author, or any elſe, to give any good Reaſon, why a State or Kingdom may not, to preſerve Unity, and conſequently Peace and Quiet, give that Encouragement to the Eſtabliſhed Religion, That none ſhall enjoy any Office of Ho-

nour or Profit, who is not of it; and who does not, as a Teſtimony of that, bring a Certificate of his actually joining in Communion with it in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And I would be very glad to ſee ſo much Moderation in thoſe who diſſent from the Church, of all ſorts, that it ſhould be adviſeable for her to put more Power in their hands than they have.

Page 10. "The next Cauſe he mentions of *Deiſm*, is "the Clergy's Prevarication in this Revoluti-"on, as to their Principles of Paſſive Obedience; in which Caſe, whatever Cauſe of Scandal may have been given, has been very much aggravated by the Enemies of the Church, of all ſorts. But methinks an equitable Conſiderer of things would rather argue thus, That if ſome of them did in this leave ſome Principles they were fond of before, 'twas a Senſe of the Good of their Country that changed their Minds, becauſe we ſee that they did ſtick to their Religion with a great deal of Zeal when it was very hazardous for them; and we have juſt Reaſon to think, that very many of them would have chearfully loſt all they had in the Cauſe, and *have reſiſted, even unto blood.*

But after all, there were not many of the Clergy that were ſo far for Paſſive Obedience, that had the Caſe been put to them as ours really

ally was at the Revolution, of a King that was actually overturning the whole Conſtitution, and either deſigned to inſlave us by a Foreign Power, or, which was much the ſame thing, ſo far hugged and encouraged a Monſtrous Power in one of his Neighbours, that in a very little time it had not been in his own Power to ſave either us or himſelf. I believe, had the Caſe been put thus, there were not very many who would have ſaid that it was unlawful for a People, in ſuch Circumſtances, to ſave themſelves; of which, beſide others, I have this Reaſon, That this was the Opinion of ſome Authors in great Reputation among our Clergy. They did indeed preach up Paſſive Obedience in general Terms, as the Scripture and the Laws of *England* deliver it; and as for ſuch Caſes, they were odious, and not very fit to be mentioned; but ſufficiently excepted in the Nature of the Thing, and ſuch as common Sence would eaſily find out whenever any Caſe of that kind ſhould happen.

Grotius, Barclay, Dr. Falkner.

As for thoſe who went farther than this, or carried the Matter with Heat and Violence, I ſhall leave them to ſtand or fall according as they can approve the Sincerity of their Hearts to our Great Maſter, who can make Allowance for Miſtake, and Prejudice, and

other Human Infirmities, though Men won't.

" But our Author is ſtill angry, and ſays, " that the Clergy are Enemies to the Govern- " ment, for a *King de facto* only, and ſtill *Sub- " jects to King James:* which, if it be true, I am ſure there is no great matter of *Prieſt-Craft* in it, for it is apparently againſt the Intereſt of their Church.

But by this, as well as other things, we may gueſs our Author knows very few of the Clergy, eſpecially thoſe that have been prefer- red ſince this Revolution, of which number are above two Thirds of the Biſhops, whom this Author calls *Jacobites*, but ſome of his Friends uſe to call the *Dead Weight* for the Go- vernment in the Houſe of Lords; which con- trary Reproaches are a good Sign that they carry themſelves like Moderate and Honeſt Men, and good Patriots of their Country. He makes a great Stir in ſeveral places with Dr. *S---k*, as if he were the only Clergy-man almoſt he had heard of, or that all the reſt were guided by his Notions. But I can aſſure him the Dean has more Reputation for his Books of Death and Judgment than he has for his *Caſe of Allegiance*.

It is a hard Matter to anſwer for ſo great a Bo- dy of Men as the Clergy of the Ch. of *England*, eſpecially

eſpecially in a Caſe where they are not all of one Mind; and ſhould I endeavour to clear them all from the Aſperſions he there throws, it's poſſible I ſhould have as little Truth of my ſide, as he has Truth or Juſtice in aſperſing them all; or as thoſe have who cenſure all Men of our Author's Stamp as Perſons againſt Kingly Government, and that deſign to make *England* a Commonwealth; and yet that there are ſome ſuch, he himſelf will, I am perſwaded, hardly deny.

As for what he charges upon them, their making the King to be only ſo *de facto*; if by it he mean that they look upon the King to be an Uſurper, and that tho' they may ſubmit to him while he has them in his Power, yet that this is to be only till they can have a good Opportunity of ſerving him who is their Rightful King. This, I believe, is a groſs Calumny, and ſuch as can be charged upon very few.

But there may be perhaps ſome others whom our Author will call *de facto* Men, who tho' they ſhould be miſtaken in the Principles they go upon, yet however may upon thoſe Principles ſerve the Goverment as well as any that live under it.

Some it's poſſible there are, who do not approve of all that was done in the Revoluti-

on,

on, and therefore would not themſelves concur in it; but yet when the thing is done, and the Government ſettled by the Conſent of the Majority, may think themſelves bound to ſubmit to it, and when they have given their Oath, to ſtick to it as much as if the Original of it were never ſo unconteſtable.

Others, it's likely, there may be, who do not think particular private Perſons bound to examine the Titles of Princes; that as in private Caſes it is not their own Judgment, but the Determination of the Judges that is to direct their Conſciences to whom they are bound to pay their Rent or any other Due; ſo in this great Due of Allegiance, it is the higheſt Authority we have, that of the Parliament, muſt direct them to whom to pay it: and whether that great Court be right or wrong in their Determinations, they are not proper Judges.

And to mention no more, there may be ſome others who may think, that tho' every thing at the Revolution was not exactly agreeable to common Forms, yet ſince it was agreeable to the great Law of Neceſſity, we ſhould thank God for the great Benefits it brought us, and ſtick to it againſt all the World.

Upon theſe Hypotheſes, and ſeveral other, it's like ſome People may have come into the

Go-

Government; and tho' they ſhould not be in every thing in the right, yet it will be a hard matter to ſhew any Reaſon why they may not be good Subjects, and very faithful to the Government: and 'tis neither juſt, nor charitable, nor for the Intereſt of the Government, to cenſure all theſe as *Subjects to King James.*

" But our Author ſtill threatens the Clergy Page 16.
" with an Oath of Abjuration. But whether he and his Friends will be able to perſuade the Parliament to appoint ſuch a one, Time muſt tell us: it is a Matter has been propoſed more than once, but has never yet been judged for the Good of the King and Kingdom. It was the Wiſdom of our Parliament, at the Beginning of the Government, to frame the Oath of Allegiance in as general Terms as they could, and to give as great a Latitude to the different Opinions and Apprehenſions of Men as poſſible; for which they had this very good Reaſon, That the Government was ſo apparently for the Good of the Kingdom, and ſo neceſſary to its Preſervation, that all Lovers of their Country would be glad to joyn with it if ſo be there was nothing to ſhock their Conſcience: and therefore to gain all ſorts of People, it was neceſſary to allow as great a Latitude for that as they could. And the ſame Reaſon

will

will hold ſtill; for the Government, bleſſed be God, is ſtill in the Intereſt of the Nation; and therefore it will be the Deſire of all Lovers of Peace to preſerve it, unleſs the Government makes them Enemies to it by its firſt becoming Enemies to them; by ſhocking their Conſciences, and turning them out of Employments as Perſons not fit to be truſted. And certainly it muſt be the Intereſt of any Government to make it ſelf as many Friends as it can, which is moſt effectually done by ſtudying in all it does the Publick Good, and next to that by provoking and diſobliging as few as poſſible. I don't queſtion but ſeveral true Lovers of the King and Government may have deſired and promoted ſuch an Oath of Abjuration: but upon conſidering the Matter as far as my Underſtanding will go, I cannot think of any Advantage it is like to bring; for it will not make the King one Friend he had not before; but no body can tell how many Enemies it may raiſe. All the Good that is like to come by it is, that we may then be able to diſtinguiſh betwixt Men: But how be able to diſtinguiſh? Not, who are Friends to the Government, and who are not; but, who are for it upon one Principle, and who are for it upon another: which will be Knowledge

ledge dear enough bought, if it muſt be by provoking all thoſe who do not come into the Government upon one and the ſame Principle, though it be the right.

In ſhort, multiplicity of Oaths has always an ill Influence upon Religion, and does naturally tend to take away that Reverence which Men ſhould have for a thing of ſo ſacred a nature; and it would be a thing very worthy the Care of the Wiſdom of the Nation, to look into that great number of Oaths of all ſorts which Men in any Employment are to take, and which, in a great meaſure, are reckon'd only things of courſe, and therefore, tho' not in their own nature, yet by accident, are apt to inſnare Mens Conſciences, to make them either ſwallow them down without conſidering, or elſe ſet their Wits at work for ſuch Salvo's and Interpretations as make the Oaths vain and uſeleſs, and are very contrary to that Plainneſs and Simplicity with which Men ſhould enter into ſo ſacred an Obligation.

To conclude this Matter, If ſuch an Oath ſhould be impoſed, and upon that be generally taken by the Clergy and their Friends; this Author would be for writing another Pamphlet about *Deiſm*, and tell all the World they had renounced their Principles; which though

it be falſe, if he means any Principles of the Church, yet however ſuch a Clamour as this would very likely be a great Prejudice to Religion. But if on the other ſide they ſhould generally refuſe it, then they would be repreſented as Enemies to the Government; and, conſidering the common Reſentments and Paſſions of Human Nature, perhaps many of them be made ſo; which may prove no more for the true Intereſt of the State, than it would of the Church.

I have dwelt the longer upon this, becauſe it is frequently made uſe of as an Argument of the Clergy's not being in the Intereſt of the Government, becauſe many of them ſeem to be againſt ſuch an Oath; but I hope by what has been ſaid it may appear, that true Lovers of the King and Government may be againſt it too, and the more againſt it for their being ſo.

But I now come to conſider another of thoſe Cauſes of *Deiſm* mentioned by our Author; which is, " The great Zeal the Clergy have " ſhewed for Modes, and Ceremonies, and " other things of an indifferent nature; who, " he ſays, have been more concerned about " them, than about the ſubſtantial Points of " Piety and Holineſs: which he is pleaſed to call

" call *Prieſt-Craft*, or the carrying on an Inte-
" reſt of their own, under pretence of Religi-
" on. About which matter, he quotes two
" Paſſages out of Sir *Matthew Hale*'s Letters.
To which I ſhall only reply, That Sir *Matthew* does in thoſe Paſſages talk like himſelf, that is, like one of the beſt Chriſtians this Age has produced: And had our Author ſpoke about theſe Matters with that Spirit and Concern for Religion the good Judge does, he ſhould have had no Reflexions from me.

It has been often matter of great Concern to me, to conſider the Infirmity of Humane Nature, how apt Men have been, in all Ages and Nations, to fall into Superſtition; to leave off the Thoughts of Piety and Holineſs, the Subduing their Paſſions, and the Sanctification of their Souls, together with the other noble Vertues of Juſtice and Charity, Meekneſs and Humility, and the like, which even common Reaſon would teach us, muſt be the beſt way to pleaſe a holy and good God; and inſtead of theſe, to expect to recommend themſelves to him by little Tricks and Obſervations of their own inventing. But eſpecially it has been a great Trouble that ſo pure and holy a Religion as that which Chriſt has delivered to us ſhould ſuffer ſo much under the ſame fate.

Much of this may have been owing to Weakneſs of Underſtanding; and more, I am afraid, to the Corruption of Nature; when Men have been unwilling to take ſo much Pains as to deny their Appetites, and govern their Souls under the influence of Religion; but yet ſtill deſired to pleaſe God and get to Heaven; which becauſe they would not do one way, they muſt artempt to do another. This has, in moſt Ages, given Men a ſtrong Bent to Superſtition, as being their only Refuge; and for this Reaſon it is chiefly, that it is ſo hard a matter to keep any Nation from running into this, or elſe into Irreligion and Atheiſm.

Men being ſo apt upon theſe Accounts to run into Superſtition of themſelves, this may have been helped forward by the Ignorance of ſome, and the Deſigns of ſome other of thoſe who ſhould have taught them better; and when Corruptions of this kind were once brought in, it would hardly be in the Power of thoſe that were wiſer and better to remove them again; as I remember St. *Auſtin* makes a great Complaint of this kind againſt the Chriſtians of his time, that they were ſo ſet upon many Superſtitious Obſervations, that he durſt not oppoſe them, as ſeeing he was only like to loſe himſelf, and ſhould not be able to do any Good upon them.

But

But not to dwell upon this any longer, I think the corrupting ſo holy a Riligion, and taking away the Power of Godlineſs, and laying great ſtreſs upon little Matters to the Prejudice of true Piety, to be ſo very ill a thing that I ſhall moſt heartily join with our Author in being angry with any that are guilty of it. But before he be too haſty with charging the preſent Church with it, I deſire he would with me, conſider theſe three Things.

1. That no Church in the World did ever declare more expreſly againſt all Superſtition of this kind than the Church of *England* has done, and none ever taught People their Duty more clearly in Oppoſition to it than is done in Our Churches. We are taught no way to pleaſe God but to keep his Commandments, and endeavour to be like him; no way to get our Sins pardoned but to repent and forſake them. The Ceremonies enjoyned in our Church are very few, deſigned only for the Decency of Publick Worſhip, with an expreſs Declaration of their being in themſelves Things indifferent, no otherwiſe good, but as they are Expreſſions of our Reverence, or tend to publick Order.

Now it's poſſible, that tho' Men look upon Things to be never ſo indifferent, yet by an unrea-

unreaſonable Oppoſition they may be forced to make a great noiſe about them, and a greater than they do about many other Things which they judge much more neceſſary, but which no body gainſays or contradicts. And this is what commonly happens in a thouſand other Caſes beſides this, that Men are forced in their own Defence to make a Stir about what they ſhould otherwiſe take little notice of. If Men will cry out againſt indifferent Matters, as *Popiſh and Anti-Chriſtian*, it cannot be Expected that they who uſe them ſhould lie quietly under ſuch a Cenſure, have themſelves and the Church they are Members of beſpattered, and their People drawn away from them, without ſaying any thing, for fear of making a Stir about indifferent Matters.

2. I deſire he would conſider, that tho' the things themſelves in Conteſt, are indeed of no great conſequence; yet, the Principles upon which they are conteſted, are; and if theſe be taken into the Account, it cannot be ſaid that the Controverſie and Heat is about indifferent Matters. The Principles upon which theſe Diſputs have been carried on, are ſuch as muſt have made them Separatiſts from all the Churches of God we ever heard or read of, and from all that were ever like to be; and if

Peace,

Peace, and Love, aud Unity, be desirable Things, and Christian Duties, these are not indifferent Matters. To name but this one among many other of their Principles of the like nature, *that things in themselves indifferent become unlawful by being Commanded.* Now if this be true, there must be an End of all Christian Societies, which never will be able to subsist without some Rules and Orders not immediately commanded by God, but such as in Discretion they see proper. Therefore such a Point as That is of Consequence, and must not be given up, unless we will give up all Peace, and Quiet, and Order in the Church.

3. I desire he would consider, That though Ceremonies are things indifferent, yet Disobedience to the lawful Commands of Superiours is not, and Schism is not; and so many ill Consequences as have come from that among us, may very easily raise a Heat much above what the nature of the things originally deserved. But after all, I will not undertake to defend either the Wisdom or the Piety of all that have been engaged in these unhappy Controversies, or to make an Apology for Heats and Animosities. Both Sides, I am afraid, have been to blame, and have too much followed their Passions, and the secret Influences

of

of thoſe who keep up theſe Heats to ſerve their own Turns of it in the State. God grant that both Sides may be wiſer for the future, and ſtudy more the things that make for Peace, and not do the Work of the great Enemy of Souls, and diſgrace their Religion under Pretence of Zeal for it. One thing I would only obſerve before I leave this Matter, the great Partiality of this Author, who when a Controverſie is, as he ſays, betwixt two Parties about indifferent Matters, blames only one Side, and that Side too which muſt be confeſſed to be upon the Defence, and lets that go which certainly began the Fray, and muſt be at leaſt as guilty in making a great Stir againſt indifferent Matters, as the Church is in making it for them.

But I now come to the Charge which he lays more directly upon the Church it ſelf; and that is, That *Three of the Thirty Nine Articles are wholly deſigned to uphold the Power of the Clergy over the People.*

But I hope there is no harm in that, if it be a Power that God deſigned they ſhould have; which methinks our Author ſhould have conſidered a little, and not have thrown off the matter ſo abruptly, as if it were in it ſelf a great Abſurdity, that they who in Scripture are called

called *Overſeers*, *Guides*, *Leaders*, *Paſtors*, *Rulers*, ſhould have any Power over the Flocks committed to their Charge. What is the Meaning of that Precept, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves, for they watch for your ſouls?* Obedience, and Power are relative Terms; and Obedience can never be a Duty but where there is Power to require it. In ſhort, Is there any Office in all the World where Men have not ſome Power in what is their proper Buſineſs?

Acts 20. 28. Heb. 13. 7. 1 Tim. 5. 17. Heb. 13. 17.

But our Author thought the whole Matter might be blown away by a hard Word, and that it is ſufficient to daſh any thing if he can but call it *Prieſt-Craft*. And indeed that is ſo hard a Word, that a Perſon who makes Conſcience of what he ſpeaks ſhould conſider well before he paſs ſuch a Cenſure, and have examined well, whether the Power claimed be reaſonable and fit, and ſuch as the nature of that Holy Office requires: He ſhould have looked into the Holy Scriptures, and the Hiſtory of the firſt Ages of the Church, when Men could propoſe no other Intereſt by being Biſhops and Miniſters, but only having a greater Crown of Glory in the other World, as being Perſons that commonly did and ſuffered moſt for Chriſt in this: he ſhould have a lit-

tle conſidered what was then the Power of Church-men; which whoſoever knows, will hardly after that accuſe the Church of *England* of Prieſt-Craft in that reſpect.

He does not name which the three Articles are he finds fault with, ſo that I am left only to gueſs; and in truth I can think but of two which ſeem any way liable to the Cenſure he paſſes upon them. It's like he may mean the three Articles which our Diſſenters have ſometimes found fault with, and which they are excuſed from Subſcribing in the Act of Toleration: but this ſhews that our Author never read them; for only one of them, the Thirty-Fourth, is about the Power of the Clergy; the other two are about the Homilies, and the Book of Conſecration of Archbiſhops and Biſhops, *&c.* I ſhall therefore take notice only of thoſe two, and wait for the third till he explain his Mind more fully.

The firſt Article, I believe, that he drives at, is the Twentieth; the Words of which are theſe; *The Church hath Power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and Authority in Controverſies of Faith. And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it ſo expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore although the Church*

be

be a Witneſs and a Keeper of Holy Writ, yet as it ought not to decree any thing againſt the ſame, ſo beſides the ſame it ought not to enforce any thing to be believed for neceſſity of Salvation.

The other Article, I believe may be the Thirty Fourth; which I ſhall here repeat at large too.

It is not neceſſary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like, for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the Diverſity of Countries and Mens Manners; ſo that nothing be ordained againſt God's Word. Whoſoever, through his private Judgment, willingly and purpoſely doth openly break the Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by Common Authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as one that offendeth againſt the Common Order of the Church, and hurteth the Authority of the Magiſtrate, and woundeth the Conſcience of weak Brethren.

Every particular or National Church hath Authority to ordain, change, and aboliſh Ceremonies, or Rites of the Church ordained only by Mens Authority; ſo that all things be done to edifying.

This is not, indeed, the firſt time that theſe Articles have been cenſured: but if rightly underſtood, I cannot ſee, that they Contain any

thing more than what all eſtabliſhed Churches I ever heard of do either claim expreſly, or at leaſt in their Practiſe; and no more than what is highly reaſonable, To begin with the firſt, *That the Church has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Controverſies of Faith.*

As for the firſt part of it, the Power of the Church, in Rites and Ceremonies, it will come in under the other Article, and therefore I ſhall paſs it here; but as to the other part, her Authority in Controverſies of Faith, I deſire to obſerve, firſt, That the Church does not here claim any Infallibility to her ſelf in determining ſuch Controverſies; ſhe is ſo far from that, that in the very next Article ſhe ſays, that even *General Councils may err* and be deceived. Art. 21.

2. I would obſerve, that the Church does not here decree that private Chriſtians are bound to believe any thing as Matter of Faith merely upon her Authority; but the Church muſt bring the Authority of God's Word for what ſhe ſays; when, and not before, ſhe ought to be believed; this ſhe declares in the ſame Article even of *General Councils*; *Wherefore things ordained by them as neceſſary to Salvation, have neither Strength nor Authority, unleſs it may be* Art. 21.

declared

declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture. And therefore,

3. Our Church allows all her Members to examine the Truth of what she teaches, by the Holy Scriptures; nay more, encourages them to do it, only advises, that this be done with Modesty and Humility. To this End, the Holy Scriptures are translated into our Mother-Tongue, and read in our Churches, and every body may have them at home and read them as much as they please; and I am sure they are in Our Churches frequently exhorted to do so, and that not only as a thing which they may do, but as a thing which they ought to do.

4. I would observe, That tho' our Church has for the Instruction and Edification of her Members, drawn up her Opinion of the chief Points of the Christian Religion in the Thirty Nine Articles, yet she no where requires the Profession of the Belief of them from the People that joyn in Communion with her; neither does she Excommunicate every body that does not believe just as she believes; if Men will but be modest, and not openly oppose, tho' she takes care to instruct them in what is the truth, yet they may enjoy a great liberty in their Opinions, and still live in her Communion.

So

So that the Meaning of the Church, in this Article, ſeems to be no more than this. That God has given the Biſhops, and other Miniſters of the Word, Authority to Preach the Goſpel, and by this made it their Duty to inſtruct thoſe under their Care in the true Faith. And that if any Controverſies happen about the Faith, they have by this their Commiſſion, Authority, and by it God has made it their Duty, to declare their Judgment in the Caſe; which may be done either by Preaching, or by Writing, either ſingle, or in a Body, as in Diſcretion they ſee fitteſt to be done: That when they have thus declared their Judgment, eſpecially if this be done by the Whole Body of the Clergy of any place, their Determination is to be received with Reverence and Reſpect by the People under their Care; Not that they are for that Reaſon bound to believe it true; but they are to carry themſelves modeſtly and humbly, to examine the Matter ſedately firſt, whether it be true or no; and if they ſhould be convinced in their Conſcience that the Determination of the Church is wrong, and find ſuch Reaſons as put the matter paſt doubt with them; yet even then not to oppoſe or contradict the Publick Determination with their Private Opinions, but to keep their

Thoughts

Thoughts to themſelves, unleſs they are withall fully convinced that the matter is of ſuch Importance that they ought not to be ſilent; or, that the Profeſſion of this Error be required of them as a Term of Communion. In ſhort, They ought to have as great a Regard as poſſible to the Peace and Quiet of the Church, and the Authority of thoſe whom God has ſet over them.

This ſeems to me to be the Meaning of this Article, in which there does not appear any very dreadful Power the Church claims over the People; here is no enſlaving their Conſciences, no keeping them in Ignorance to ſerve any Ends or Deſigns upon them, no locking up the Scriptures from them, no uſurping Authority above the Word of God, or making that uſeleſs to them, by denying People the uſe of their own Reaſon in reading of it: In ſhort nothing appears here of that horrible Imputation of *Prieſt-Craft*.

The Authority here claimed is no more than what is abſolutely neceſſary to the Peace and Quiet of the Church, no more than what is implied in the Authority God has given Miniſters to Preach the Goſpel; no more than what is plainly ſuppoſed in thoſe Names of *Teachers*, *Paſtors*, *Guides*, *Rulers*, &c. given them

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in the Scripture. And no more than all the Reformed Churches claim either expreſly in Words, or elſe virtually by making Confeſſions of Faith to inſtruct their People, and which they expect not to have openly contradicted by any that live within their Communion.

Vid. Harm. Confeſſ.

Thus much may ſerve for the firſt Article about the Power of the Church in *Controverſies of Faith*: I proceed now to the ſecond, about her Power in Appointing *Rites and Ceremonies*; which Words, have for ſome time ſounded a little frightfully in *England* by reaſon of the Prejudices ſome have taken againſt ſome Ceremonies in uſe among us; whereas, had that Article been expreſſed in ſome other Words, it's probable enough it would hardly have met with Oppoſition: for, the Meaning of it ſeems to be no more than this, That as God has made it the Duty of thoſe that are intruſted with the Government of the Church to look after the Purity of the Faith, and conſequently has given them Authority to do it; ſo he has alſo to take care of his Worſhip, that it be done in ſuch a decent and reverend manner as becomes the Worſhip of God; and to that end, to take care to appoint ſuch Times, and Places, ſuch a Method, and Order, and other

other Circumſtances of it, as may beſt ſerve for the Honour of God, and the Peace and good Order of the Church; and that whoever ſhall openly break ſuch good Orders, *eſtabliſhed by Publick Authority, ought to be rebuked openly, as one that offends againſt the Common Order of the Church, and hurteth the Authority of the Magiſtrate, and offendeth the Conſciences of weak Brethren.* But that the Church in this muſt not act by arbitrary Rules, appoint what ſhe pleaſes, or clog Chriſtianity with a number of unprofitable Ceremonies, but all things muſt be done to *edifying.*

This ſeems to be the Senſe of it, as far as our Author may be ſuppoſed to find fault with it; the reſt is in Oppoſition to ſome Points of Popery not needful to be taken notice of at preſent.

Now what is there in this that can be juſtly found fault with? Has God made it the Duty of thoſe that are *Rulers* and *Guides* in the Church to look after his Worſhip, and ſee that it be performed with Reverence, and Decency, and good Order, or has he Not? If he has made it their Duty, he has given them Authority to do it (for God makes nothing to be any Man's Duty which he has not Authority to do.) If he has given them Authority to

do it, he has by that made it the Duty of other People to comply with ſuch Orders *which are not againſt the Word of God.* Indeed how can they be ſaid to be *Rulers* and *Guides* in the Church who have no Authority; not ſo much as to ſee that God be Decently ſerved?

To conclude this Head; This is a Power which, by what appears to us, has been exerciſed in all Ages of the Church. One of the Chief Uſes of Synods, both of National and General, has been to regulate Matters of this kind. And as for the Reformed Churches, tho' ſome have determined more, and ſome fewer of the Circumſtances of God's Worſhip, yet all have determined ſome, and conſequently claimed a Right to do it, as much as the Church of *England*; who pretends no Right to do any thing of this kind, but ſo far as it does not contradict *God's Word*, and tends to *Edification.*

One thing I would obſerve to our Author before I proceed; and that is, That the whole Method of the Publick Worſhip of God among us, is not only appointed by the Eccleſiaſtical Authority, but by the Civil too, and cannot be altered but by the ſame Authority: and therefore he need not be afraid of any Exceſſive Power of the Clergy.

But

But I now come to conſider a Charge of a much higher nature, becauſe it makes the *Growth of Deiſm* to come from thoſe Doctrines which Perſons that read the Scripture will be apt to conclude (notwithſtanding all this Author can ſay againſt them) to be the chief Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion. He ſays, "That many turn *Deiſts* from the Impoſſibili- "ty of Believing the Doctrine of the Trinity; "which is made a Point neceſſary to Salvation, "and yet is in it ſelf unintelligible, of which "thoſe who profeſs it have no Notion, and "differ widely among themſelves about it: "That he can't ſee to what End ſuch a Do- "ctrine was revealed, which can ſerve for no- "thing but to puzzle and amuſe, but can nei- "ther teach Men any thing, nor have any In- "fluence upon their Practice.

Theſe are the chief Things of what he objects about the Doctrine of the Trinity, and do deſerve to be very ſeriouſly conſidered. But becauſe ſeveral Perſons have deſignedly written upon this Subject, and it's very like others quickly may again, I ſhall ſay only ſome few Words to it, and refer my Reader to them.

It is an Unhappineſs in all Controverſies, that he who objects will be able to talk generally more plauſibly, and perhaps intelligibly,

than he that defends. The Reaſon of this is, That to defend a Thing well, a Man muſt have a clear and a full Notion of the whole Matter; but a little, and a ſuperficial Knowledge, will be enough to find out Difficulties. But this does not hold in any thing ſo much, as when Men diſpute about the Nature of God, of which we know at beſt very little; and when we come to explain our ſelves, muſt talk very darkly, and commonly then find out our Ignorance of what we thought we knew before.

I remember *Tully* ſomewhere obſerves, That tho' all the Philoſophers agreed in this, That there was a God; yet, no two of them agreed what he was. Now it's like ſome of the Wits of thoſe times might from thence take an Occaſion to laugh at the whole Matter; that the Buſineſs was unintelligible; that thoſe who talked moſt of God did not agree what they meant by that Name, but only agreed in a Word which every Man put a different Senſe upon. But ſober and conſidering Perſons would argue quite another way; That tho' they could not tell what God was, yet ſo far they knew, That he was the Maker and the Governour of the World: this almoſt all of them agreed in; and this was a ſufficient Foun-

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dation for the Worſhip they were to pay him; and as for the Conteſts about his Nature, or Subſtance, or Eſſence, it was a great Evidence that Men were fully convinced of his Being, that ſo many Difficulties and Diſputes could never beat them out of the Belief of it.

The Doctrine of the Trinity, if Men will go beyond what is revealed, has very great Difficulties in it; but if Men will content themſelves with what God has told us of the Matter, tho' this won't anſwer all the Queſtions that Curioſity may ask, yet it may give us a Notion clear enough to anſwer thoſe Ends for which God revealed it.

The Scripture plainly tells us, that there is but one God, and yet gives the Name and the Attributes of God to the Father, to Jeſus Chriſt the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt. How far each of theſe is diſtinct from the other, it no where tells us, only that each of them is God; and yet there is but one God. Here then we muſt ſtick, That the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghoſt God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God; and muſt conclude with our ſelves, that there is ſome way which God has not thought fit to reveal to us, perhaps becauſe we are not now capable of underſtanding it, whereby theſe three are one.

Now

Now in all this there is no Abſurdity or Contradiction; but the only Difficulty is, whether this be ſufficient. But if God has revealed this, and revealed no more, that ought to be no Difficulty: this is not ſufficient to gratifie Mens Curioſity, or to anſwer all thoſe Queſtions that we would indeed be glad to hear reſolved: but without going farther, here is ſufficient in this to anſwer thoſe Ends which we may ſuppoſe God had in Revealing it. For,

1. If the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are God, here is ſufficient Foundation for Divine Worſhip to be paid to each of Them. So that this Doctrine of the Trinity is not, as our Author repreſents it, a Doctrine of meer Speculation, but is a Foundation of one of the greateſt Religious Duties, the Worſhip of God. If Jeſus Chriſt be repreſented to me in Scripture as God, as *God bleſſed for ever*, I ought then to Worſhip him, tho' I don't know how far he is diſtinct from the Father or the Holy Ghoſt, or how theſe three are but one God.

2. We may from the Revelation of ſo much, underſtand the chief Points of the Chriſtian Religion. The great Doctrine of the Goſpel of the Redemption of the World by Jeſus Chriſt, cannot be underſtood without it; but with it,

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we can give ſuch an Account as can be expected of a matter of ſo high a Nature. Of the Dignity of Our Saviour's Perſon, That the *Word was made Fleſh*, that God was *Manifeſted in the Fleſh*; and thence of the great Love of God, and of Our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt to us, who tho he were *in the form of God, yet for our ſakes humbled himſelf even to the death of the Croſs.* We have hence a Reaſon of the great Value and Merits of his Sufferings, which muſt needs be very great in ſuch a Perſon whom, *when he came into the world, all the Angels of God were to worſhip*; which cannot be accounted for, without ſuch an ineffable Union to the Divine Nature, as makes the Perſon Jeſus Chriſt to be truly God. And to name no more, This gives us an account of our being Baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; of which, without the Belief of each of them to be God, it would be a hard matter to give a good Account; but with this we may, without knowing how far each is diſtinguiſh'd from the other.

Joh. 1. 14. 1 Tim 3. 16.

Philip. 2. 6, 7.

Heb. 1. 6.

But my Deſign was only to touch upon theſe things, to ſhew that what God has revealed has not thoſe Abſurdities in it our Author ſuggeſts, and is ſufficient to anſwer all the wiſe Ends of the Revelation, perhaps as much

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as if we had been told more; and if Men will go further than this, and then quarrel with one another, it is not the Revelation of God, but their own Notions, which they quarrel about.

But to return now to the Matter of *Deism*; I am afraid that it is but too true, that these Controversies have been a Prejudice to the Christian Religion: but then I believe, the Guilt of this must light chiefly upon Our *Author's* Friends, the *Socinians*, who have made it their Business to expose and ridicule those Doctrines, which will be found, after all, to be the Doctrines of the Holy Scriptures; and to have been the Belief of Christians in all Ages; which, as it is in it self a very great Argument for the Truth of them; so on the other side, it must be a mighty Shock to Christianity, to represent those things as Absurd and Contradictory, which have been for so long the Common Faith of Christians; and indeed, it will be a hard matter to have any great Opinion of that Religion which has been in the World for above sixteen hundred Years, and has hardly ever yet had any Professors but those who have grosly Misunderstood, and Misrepresented it.

But it is not my Buſineſs to recriminate; and I have deſignedly hitherto avoided it, that I might not give any Occaſion to Quarrels, of which, God knows, the World is but too full already. God in Mercy forgive all thoſe who have any way done any thing to the Prejudice of ſo holy a Religion, and grant that they may Repent, and by their Zeal and Concern for it, for the future, may make ſome Amends for the Miſchief they have done.

To conclude this Head; This is not the firſt Time or Age in which the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity has been charged with Abſurdities; yet notwithſtanding that, it ſtill continues to be the Faith of Chriſtians, and I believe is ſtill like to be ſo, notwithſtanding all the Difficulties either the Diſputes of its Friends, or the Oppoſition of its Enemies, can load it with: a very good Evidence this, that it is very well founded, ſince ſo many Shocks have not been able to overthrow it. And methinks there may be fetched ſome Evidence for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion it ſelf, from the Oppoſition which this and ſome other of its Doctrines have met with in the World. None of its Enemies can prove any Abſurdity or Contradiction in them; but it muſt be confeſſed, that they are ſuch as are not in themſelves very plauſible

and taking, or very apt in their own Nature to win upon the World: and therefore we ſee that the Apoſtle complains, that Preaching up Chriſt, and the Method of our Redemption by him, was to *the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.* If we add to this Conſideration, what a mighty Prejudice the World commonly has againſt receiving any thing upon the Credit of ſuch mean Perſons as the firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity were, it will be very hard to conceive how this Religion ſhould ever have prevailed, unleſs God had in ſome extraordinary manner concurred with it. The Truth is, it is not eaſie to imagine how theſe things ſhould ever have come into any body's head, unleſs God had Revealed them. But beſides, if Men had had a mind to invent, they would have thought of ſomething more plauſible; and of all things in the World, they would never have made it their Choice to preach up a Crucified Saviour: Certainly nothing but a full Conviction of the Truth of it, could ever have perſuaded a few mean People, of a Deſpiſed Nation, to think of Converting the World to ſuch a Doctrine as this; and nothing but the mighty Power of God concurring with them, could ever have brought it to effect. The leſs internal Credibility there is in the Nature of the

the Things themſelves, the more external Evidence is neceſſary to gain 'em Belief; eſpecially if for the Belief of theſe, Men muſt go againſt their former Prejudices, and hazard the Loſs of all they have.

I have now conſidered the chief Cauſes of *Deiſm* aſſigned by our Author: there are ſome other matters ſtill behind, but it was not my Intent to take notice of every thing that might be found fault with in his Pamphlet; but only to make ſome Reflexions upon thoſe Calumnies or Miſtakes in it that were like to do the greateſt Miſchief. As for thoſe things that remain, they are either only Repetitions of what has been ſpoke to already, or elſe Matters of ſmall conſequence, or ſuch things as the World will eaſily ſee through; and therefore I do not judge it proper to trouble either him or my ſelf about them.

I hope I need not beg pardon either of God or the World, for the manner of handling theſe Matters; and I am ſure I need not beg pardon of the Perſon who wrote the Pamphlet I reflect upon: A Man that has a hearty Concern for Religion, cannot but ſometimes ſhew that Concern where he ſees Religion in Danger, and upon that account ſpeak his Mind plainly. But I am ſo great an Enemy to all Wrath and

Bitterneſs in Writing, that I do not think it juſtifiable even in replying to one of the ſpiteful-leſt Pamphlets I ever ſaw; *for the Wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.* The Cauſe of God and Religion does not need the Paſſions of Men to defend it. And whoever brings them into the Controverſie, whatever Good he may do it one way, will certainly do it Prejudice another.

Having now diſmiſſed our Author, I think it proper before I conclude, to prevent any Prejudice which ſuch a Repreſentation of things as he has given may do to the Chriſtian Religion, to ſay ſomething to that. In doing this, I ſhall not inſiſt upon thoſe many Arguments commonly brought to prove the Truth of it; ſuch as the exact fulfilling of the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament concerning the Birth, and Life, and Death of our Bleſſed Saviour; the many Miracles that were done in Confirmation of this Religion for ſeveral Ages together, eſpecially the Reſurrection of our Saviour himſelf from the Dead; the Purity of its Precepts, the Nobleneſs and Excellency of its Promiſes, the Divine and Heavenly Nature of it; which whoever well conſiders, will find it to be a Doctrine worthy the Care of a good God. Theſe things have been largely inſiſted upon

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by others, and do indeed effectually prove what they are brought for. But I ſhall at preſent paſs them over, and deſire leave only to inſiſt upon this one thing, which I choſe to do, becauſe it contains in it a full Anſwer to the whole Method of arguing which our Author puts in the mouths of his *Deiſts*; and that is this, That the Perſons who were the firſt Preachers and Promoters of our Religion, and who have delivered us an Account of the Miracles done in Confirmation of it, were Perſons who could not propoſe to themſelves any Intereſt of their own in what they did; they could have no Expectations, but of that Reward which their Religion promiſes them in the other World; as for the things of This, we ſee plainly they did not pretend to them: Their Maſter had told them, that Perſecution was like to be the Portion of his Diſciples; which accordingly they did very ſufficiently meet with, being perſecuted from one Place to another, till at laſt they laid down their Lives in Confirmation of that Truth they had preached. But we ſee however, that while they had their Lives, they went very zealouſly and cheerfully on, being joyful if they could but do their Maſter's Buſineſs, and contribute toward the ſaving of Souls, whatever became of themſelves. Of this S. *Paul*

gives

gives us a pathetical Account in his Farewel-Speech to the Church of *Epheſus*, as you may ſee at large in the 20th Chapter of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*; *You know*, ſays he, *from the firſt day that I came into Aſia, how I have been with you at all times, ſerving the Lord with all lowlineſs, and many tears, and temptations which happened to me from the lying in wait of the Jews. And now behold, being led by the ſpirit, I go up to Jeruſalem, not knowing what ſhall befall me there; only that the Holy Ghoſt hath told me, that in every City bonds and impriſonments abide me. But I regard not theſe things, neither count I my life dear, ſo I may but finiſh my courſe with joy, and the Miniſtry that I have received of the Lord Jeſus to preach the Goſpel of the grace of God.* Theſe, and many other things, he there ſpeaks to them with that Air of Seriouſneſs and Concern, and true Greatneſs of Soul which became an Apoſtle of Chriſt; and plainly ſhewed, that he was in good earneſt. The truth is, it ſeems to be impoſſible that there ſhould be ſo much Zeal and Earneſtneſs to promote that which they were not fully convinced in their Conſcience to be true; and much more impoſſible that they ſhould with ſo much Joy ſuffer for that which if it were falſe they muſt know to be an Impoſture, and an Impudent Lye.

But it may be ſome may object, that the bare Suffering for any Cauſe is not a ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of it; becauſe we ſee, that there is ſcarce any Religion, but what has had thoſe who have Suffered for it: And therefore if that were a good Argument of the Truth of any Religion, it would prove Contradictions to be true, it being a very common thing in the World, to ſee ſome Men ſuffer for Affirming, and others for Denying the ſame thing.

As to this it may be anſwered, That there ſeems in ſeveral Reſpects to be a great Difference betwixt the Sufferings of the firſt Chriſtians for their Religion, and the Sufferings of any other Party; but this I would not inſiſt upon. All that I would prove from their Sufferings, is, That they were honeſt Men, and did really believe That for which they Suffered to be Truth; and this, I think, cannot well be denied, if we grant 'em to have had Fleſh and Blood as we now have. And this may perhaps be ſaid for thoſe that ſuffer on other Accounts, That they are honeſt Men too. And therefore the beſt way to ſee the difference, is, to conſider the different Natures of the Things for which they ſuffer. As for Matters of Opinion, or the Senſe of doubtful Expreſſions in a Book, or the like, theſe are

Caſes

Caſes in which an honeſt Man may be miſtaken; and therefore if he ſuffer in ſuch a Caſe, tho' it may prove him an honeſt Man, yet it does not prove him to be in the right; becauſe in Caſes of this kind, the honeſteſt Man in the World may be ſometimes Miſtaken; and becauſe he is an honeſt Man, will, if there be occaſion, ſuffer for that Miſtake: But the Cauſe for which the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians ſuffered was of a different Nature, and ſuch as they could not be miſtaken about. A great part of what they Preached to the World were plain and open matters of fact; that they ſaw their Saviour frequently do Miracles; that they ſaw him heal the Sick, caſt out Devils, raiſe the Dead, by his bare Word; that they ſaw the Wonders at his own Death; that they ſaw him frequently after his Reſurrection; that he gave them ſuch and ſuch Inſtructions to Preach to the World; that they ſaw the miraculous Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt at the day of *Pentecoſt*; that they heard the whole Multitude of their Friends and Acquaintance whom they knew before, to ſpeak with Tongues they had never been taught; that this Gift, and that of working other Miracles, was common in the Church, and frequently and openly exerciſed: Theſe are plain and open Matters

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of fact, ſuch as they could not miſtake in, ſuch as muſt be true, or elſe the moſt impudent Lies that ever were told; and yet theſe are the things for which they did ſo joyfully ſuffer the Loſs of All, and undergo all that's hard to human Nature.

To conclude this Head; There can be no Reaſon imagined why Our Saviour, and his Apoſtles ſhould chuſe ſuch parts to act in the World, without a full Conviction of the Truth of what they ſaid: as for our Bleſſed Saviour, he was to be a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*, to live a mean and a deſpiſed life, and at laſt to be *cut off for the ſins of his people*; which certainly was no eligible part, unleſs upon thoſe noble motives upon which we ſuppoſe he undertook it: And as for the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, it cannot be imagined what ſhould make 'em take ſo much Pains, run up and down the World with ſo much Zeal, preach with ſo much Concern, and ſuffer Bonds and Impriſonments, Ignominy and Contempt, and at laſt Death it ſelf, with ſo much Joy, unleſs they were fully ſatisfied of the Reality of thoſe great things they preached to the World.

This being plainly the Caſe of the firſt Preachers and Promoters of Chriſtianity, we may from hence infer, 1. That

That the Christian Religion was no Politick Invention, or Trick of State to serve any Ends or Designs of Government upon the People: This is indeed a very common Objection against Religion, that it is only an Art of Governors to keep People in Order, and so to serve their turns of them. And it must be confessed that to Persons who do not examine things to the bottom, there has been Occasion given to make this Objection: for in most Ages and Nations, Persons in Authority, as well as private Men, have served their own Designs under pretence of Religion; sometimes by inventing things to work upon Peoples Superstition, at other times by encouraging Parties, or any particular Opinions, as may best serve their own Interest. These things, no question, have been frequently done; and therefore we have reason to suspect any thing if we can give no better an Account of its Original. But as for those who argue from hence against Religion in general, and say it's all a Politick Device, I desire they would not be too hasty, but consider well what they mean by Religion. As for the Principles of Natural Religion, that God is the Maker and Governour of the World, that he is therefore to be worshipped and served by his Creatures, that Men

are to be juſt and honeſt and true to their Words, and the like, theſe are things we have plain Reaſon for; and therefore theſe, tho' they may be made uſe of to ſerve a Turn, yet cannot be Inventions of State. And as for the Chriſtian Religion, none of its Enemies ever pretended that it came into the World in this manner. All that States or Kingdoms had to do with it for ſeveral Ages, was, only to perſecute it and its Profeſſors. Not but that the Chriſtian Religion may have been ſince made uſe of to ſerve Deſigns as well as any other, and have had ſeveral things added to it with that Proſpect. But I now ſpeak only for ſo much of it as is to be found in the New Teſtament, and it's as plain as any thing can be in Hiſtory, and no Man that I know of ever yet pretended the contrary, that this is no ſuch Invention. And if they will but grant us the Principles of Natural Religion, and the Chriſtian Religion, we will grant them, if they pleaſe, that all the reſt is only Trick and Deſign.

2. Since it's plain that the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity could propoſe no worldly Intereſt to themſelves in what they did; but on the other ſide, met with Scorn and Contempt, Bonds and Impriſonments;

yet for all that went very zealouſly and cheerfully on as long as their Perſecutors would let 'em live: We may from thence infer, that what they did was not to ſerve any End or Deſign of their own; it's very plain there could be no *Prieſt-Craft* here. And therefore whatever may be laid to the Charge of After-Ages in this kind, has nothing to do here: the Chriſtian Religion muſt be freed from this Aſperſion. And this is at once a full Anſwer to the whole method of Arguing uſed in that Pamphlet I have reflected upon. That ſuppoſing the worſt, that all thoſe ill things he ſays of the Clergy were indeed true, that is really nothing to the Chriſtian Religion, which was either true or falſe many hundred Years ago, and cannot now be made either, by any thing that can be done now: the Credit of it does not depend upon the preſent Times, or Perſons, or any thing they can do; but upon the Character of the firſt Preachers of it, and upon what they did: if they were Men of Integrity and Honeſty, and did, and ſaw done, what they tell us, then this Religion muſt be true; and therefore that's the thing to be enquired after: but he that will but reflect a little upon what has been ſaid, can hardly doubt of that, unleſs Human Nature were a different thing

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then from what it is now, and Men had then as ſtrong a Deſire to undergo Contempt, and Sufferings, and Death it ſelf, without any reaſon, as we ſee they have now to avoid them.

It is therefore no Reflexion upon Chriſtianity, that the Clergy now live, and live handſomely by their Profeſſion. Time was, when their Religion was in a ſtate of Perſecution, and then none ſuffered ſo much as they for it; and I do not queſtion but a great number of them would cheerfully do the ſame now, ſhould God call 'em to it: but the Times are altered, our Religion is now encourag'd; and when that is ſo, certainly, both God, and Nature, and the common Reaſon of Mankind, require that the Miniſters of it ſhould be encouraged too.

It is look'd upon by ſome as a ſufficient Reaſon to throw away any thing a Miniſter can ſay without conſidering, becauſe they ſay it is his Trade, the thing by which he gets his Living; and therefore, that he muſt talk ſo. To which, I ſhall only reply in a word, that it is abſurd enough, that ſince Heathens have done perſecuting their Miniſters, they won't believe their Religion, unleſs Chriſtians themſelves will perſecute them too. But however this be, whatever Miniſters may get now by

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their Religion, the firſt Miniſters of it, it's very plain, did not get any thing by it but the Saving of their Souls; ſo that there is no reaſon why they ſhould queſtion believing them.

3. From what was laid down before we may infer, That as our Religion could not be an Invention of State, nor an Invention of thoſe who Preached it; ſo neither could it come from Enthuſiaſm, or any thing of that kind, which is the only thing that can be pretended beſides. From what has been ſaid of the Apoſtles, *&c.* no Man can reaſonably doubt of their being honeſt Men, and really believing what they ſaid to be true; ſo that there remains nothing, but to ſee whether they were deceieved or no. But as I ſhewed before, a great part of the things they Preached, and ſuch as confirm the Truth of all the reſt, were plain and open Matters of fact, *the things which they had ſeen and heard*, and thoſe repeated in ſo many Inſtances, that they could not be deceived; as may appear to any that will but conſider what has been ſaid before, or read carefully over the Hiſtory recorded in the Evangeliſts, and the *Acts of the Apoſtles*. Matters of Opinion and Speculation, may eaſily be impoſed upon fanciful People; but ſuch a Series of Matters of fact cannot be impoſed upon

on Mens Sight and Hearing: and yet if those are true, All the rest of our Religion must be true too.

4. This shews us a manifest Difference betwixt the Miracles wrought by the Apostles, &c. and some that have been since pretended in Confirmation of the Popish Errors; That the Apostles plainly could have no Interest to invent, or relate Matters falsly; if they did not believe their Religion true, it was their Interest to lay it down, and have nothing more to do with it: but as for the other, to say no worse of them, they do evidently serve a Turn; and what does so, unless there be very good Evidence for it, we have just Reason to suspect.

Having done, in short, with what I designed to speak to about the Christian Religion, I would now seriously address my self to those who have any doubt about these Matters, and especially to those who set up for *Deism* in *England*. The Matter is certainly of very great Consequence, and what we are all very much concerned in, and therefore does at least deserve a serious Examination, and not to be slightly passed over, or made matter of Jest, as has been the Custom of too many, who, I believe, have little considered whether these

these things are true or no, or what the Importance of them is, supposing they are true. But a Man had need be very sure before he venture to affront God, and what he has revealed to us, in such a manner. I desire therefore they would consider with me these few things.

1. That supposing the Christian Religion be true; it must be a very dangerous thing to be an Infidel. It's a common Opinion in this Age, that Men are under no Laws or Obligations as to their Belief and Opinions of Things, and therefore cannot be punished for them let them be what they will; and this makes them easily declare for, or against any thing as Humour or Inclination leads them, without much considering the Matter. And indeed so far they are in the right, that God requires no Man to believe without Evidence; and if a Man knows what he does, he cannot believe any thing but so far as he finds it true. But it's very plain on the other side, that God may command his Creatures to take notice of some things at their Peril; and if their Disbelief of what he reveals comes by their own Fault, this is then as criminal as any other Immorality. And therefore our Religion frequently reckons Infidelity among those Sins for which Men shall be punished in the other World. The very

Words

Words by which our Saviour gave his Apoſtles Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel ſhew this; *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature; he that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* By which, I ſuppoſe, he means every one that has the Goſpel preached to him, but either through Negligence, or fear of Perſecution, or ſome other Corruption of Heart, remains ſtill in his Unbelief. And St. *John*, in *Rev.* 21. 8. reckons up Unbelievers among thoſe that ſhall have their Portion in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimſtone; *But the Fearful, and Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Lyars, ſhall have their portion in the Lake that burns with fire and brimſtone.* What God will do with thoſe that never heard of the Goſpel, he has no where told us; no queſtion but he will deal with them according to the Rules of Juſtice and Mercy. But it's plain that God has no where promiſed *Heaven* but upon condition of Faith in Chriſt, that being a free Gift which he can diſpoſe of on what Conditions he pleaſes; and as for thoſe who live under the preaching of the Goſpel, but through any fault of their own remain Infidels, according to the Scriptures, Infidelity is in ſuch a Sin of as dan-

gerous a nature as any Sin whatever. And therefore a Man had need be very ſure, and have examined the matter very throughly before he ſet up for an Infidel, when the Conſequence of it is like to be ſo terrible if the Chriſtian Religion ſhould prove true at laſt.

2. I deſire they would conſider how little Reaſon there is why any Man ſhould be proud or fond either of being, or being counted, an Infidel. The great Principles of Infidelity at preſent are, That there is no Future State, no ſuch things as Rewards or Puniſhments in the other World. Now ſuppoſe this might be proved true, What would the Infidel get by all this? He would only prove himſelf to be a mean, pitiful, and contemptible Creature; a Creature the moſt awkwardly made of any in the whole Creation; a Creature, which is to be included within the ſpace of a few Years; and ſpends almoſt all that time either in little Follies, or vain Hopes, or toilſome Cares, either in fruitleſs Deſires, or inſipid Enjoyments, either in real Sufferings, or imaginary Fears, or ſomething or other of that kind; and when this ſhort impertinent Scene is ended, muſt then only become a little Dirt, as mean contemptible Dirt as any he now treads upon. Methinks this is but a poor pitiful thing, and

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a melancholy proſpect to any that regards the Dignity of his Nature, and yet is the very beſt that ſuch a Man can propoſe, and a Favour that, after all, he cannot be certain of. This is indeed, it muſt be confeſſed, much better than to be eternally miſerable, and that is the Reaſon that ſo many wicked Men fly to it as their Refuge; and indeed they were in the right of it, if either the one or the other were unavoidable: But ſince, by the Mercy of God, this may be avoided only by leaving our Sins, it muſt be great Stupidity for a Man to look upon it to be his Intereſt to die like the Beaſts that periſh, ſo he may but indulge himſelf a little while here, rather than have the Principles of Chriſtianity true, according to which it is in his Power, by the Grace of God, to be happy for ever, and in proſpect of that to make his Life very comfortable in this World.

3. I would deſire them to conſider ſeriouſly, whether they have thought upon the Matter as they ought to do; whether they have throughly, and with Attention, weighed the Principles of Religion, and the Arguments for them, to ſee whether they are true or no. It's plain that theſe things have been the Belief of many wiſe conſidering Men for ſeveral Ages, who have ventured all they have in the World upon

it, and loſt all for it; and therefore the Matter ſhould be at leaſt well examined before they venture to declare againſt it; for before that be done they can't tell but after all it may prove true; and if it do, they are undone for ever. But then the Buſineſs muſt not be weighed ſlightly, or put off with a Jeſt, or judged only by Objections, which Wit may raiſe againſt any thing, and of which perhaps by reaſon of the Sublimity of the Matter, we are not proper Judges; but the whole Evidence muſt be taken together; and after all, we muſt not expect ſtrict Demonſtration in a Caſe which, ſuppoſing it true, will not admit of it; but be content with ſuch Reaſons and Proofs as an honeſt impartial Man would be in a matter of this kind.

But above all, it is neceſſary that we purge our Minds from all earthly and ſenſual Paſſions; we muſt endeavour after a great Sincerity and Purity of Soul; for Religion, the Chriſtian Religion eſpecially, is a thing of a ſpiritual and ſublime Nature, directly contrary to all thoſe mean Paſſions and Inclinations that debaſe the Soul; and therefore till that be purified, a Man is no proper Judge in this matter, he cannot reliſh or ſee the Excellency of this Religion: Common Senſe muſt indeed

judge

judge of the external Arguments that prove the Truth of it, and from them a very wicked Man may conclude that this is the True Religion; but ſtill a Man can hardly diſcern, at leaſt not taſte and inwardly feel the Excellency of it without purity of Soul, which muſt take away much of the Force of thoſe Arguments brought for the Truth of it. To conclude this Matter, A guilty defiled Soul muſt needs be of a Party againſt the Chriſtian Religion, and therefore is not fit to be a Judge.

Conſider therefore ſeriouſly with your ſelves, whether all this I have now ſpoke of have been done, and whether it be not the greateſt Madneſs in the World to venture your Souls upon it if it have not.

Having now finiſhed what I deſigned, I would humbly take leave before I conclude, in a few Words, to addreſs my ſelf to the Reverend Clergy of this Kingdom, who are the Perſons principally ſtruck at in that Pamphlet upon which I have been reflecting; That ſince their Enemies take all Occaſions not only to make them vile, but from thence alſo to reflect upon Our Holy Religion, they would make it their great Care to *cut off all ſuch Occaſions from thoſe who ſeek it.*

It has been a great Misfortune to the Preſent Eſtabliſh'd Church, that it has had ſo many Enemies of all ſorts who have been ready to pry into the Lives and Actions of the Clergy, to expoſe all their Failings, and miſrepreſent Things that might well bear a good Conſtruction; not, after all, but that in ſo great a Body of Men we muſt expect there will be ſome neither ſo good, nor ſo wiſe and diſcreet as the true Friends of Religion would be glad to ſee them: but I hope, that if there have been any who have not hitherto been ſo careful as they ought to be, they will now eſpecially lay to heart the great Obligations their Holy Profeſſion brings upon them, becauſe not only their own Honour, and that of the Church, but even of our common Chriſtianity, is concerned in it.

A grave and ſerious, a diligent and induſtrious, a peaceable and unanimous Clergy, are the likelieſt means to recover the Reputation of Religion, and to make it ſenſibly lovely in the Eyes of the World: whereas on the other ſide, every looſe, or careleſs, ambitious, or contentious Clergyman, does indeed only expoſe and betray that Cauſe which he is bound to promote. But eſpecially as there is nothing more eſſential to our Religion than

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Meekneſs, and Love, and Gentleneſs, ſo there is nothing more ſhocking than to ſee the contrary Character appear in the Sermons or Writings of Church-men, tho' it be in the Defence of Truth: It is very bad for Perſons of that Holy Profeſſion to be guilty of Vices in the private Conduct of their Lives; but to Preach or to Write bitterly againſt each other, is to proclaim to the World a Spirit directly contrary to that of their Religion; and to call as many as they can to take notice of it.

In ſhort, Religion is a thing cannot be long kept up, as Secular Factions may be, by Intereſt, or Grandeur, or any thing of that kind; no, it muſt have real internal Eſteem in the Hearts of Men, otherwiſe the Effect is very like to be, that they will leave that for ſome other, or elſe look upon all Religion to be only Trick and Deſign. It is true indeed, that no Actions of Men can alter the Natures of Things, or make that Religion to be true or falſe now, which was determinately one of them many hundred Years ago. But it is not every body that either can or will conſider things aright, that requires ſome Pains, and Time, and Freedom from Prejudice; but a Good Life, eſpecially in Clergy-men, is a ſenſible and a viſible thing; every body knows

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that the great End of Religion is to make Men Pious and Holy, and therefore they will very naturally incline there where they ſee moſt of that.

To conclude all in a Word, The beſt way that either Miniſters, or People can ſerve their Religion, is by adorning it with a holy Converſation; and it concerns all, as they will at the Great day anſwer for the Scandal brought upon it, that they do not by their ill Lives, and as much as poſſible not by any Indiſcretion, cauſe the Enemies of the Lord to Blaſpheme.

FINIS.